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ADM-10.1
Memo of Record

MEMORANDUM FOR THE RECORD

SUBJECT: Conversation with Dr. Seamans of NASA

1. Dr. Wheelon and I called on Dr. Seamans in his office at NASA on 30 June. We introduced the conversation by explaining some of the organizational developments in NRO and the attempts to define organizational relationships [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We explained that a possible organizational arrangement would involve an operational agency responsible for the launching and recovery of satellites. This organization would receive finished payloads on a requisitioned basis and be responsible for all activity involved in the launching and recovery. A different organization would be responsible for the development, production and delivery (or procurement) of the payloads. We wanted to know how NASA ran their various operations and whether there was anything in their experience which paralleled the arrangement described above.

2. Dr. Seamans reviewed a number of different NASA programs which vary slightly as between each other. All of them have in common the fact that they are funded out of the NASA budget and that NASA has the ultimate responsibility for all operational aspects of the programs. Responsibility for procurement of boosters and vehicles varies as between programs, the Air Force being responsible in some instances whereas in others NASA appears to deal directly with individual contractors. In the weather program, funds are made available to NASA by the Department of Commerce which is responsible for launches in accordance with requirements levied by the Weather Bureau. In this particular program I gather that some of the instruments are actually manufactured under contracts let by the Department of Commerce. Assembly of the vehicles, however, including accommodation of the instruments in the capsules, is the

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responsibility of NASA. In the GEMINI program, a working relationship has been developed between NASA and the Air Force for the purpose of meeting certain Defense Department requirements through the medium of the GEMINI program. A board, of which Dr. Seamans and Dr. McMillan are co-chairmen and on which General Schriever also sits, meets periodically to review joint NASA/Air Force requirements. So far they have experienced no serious difficulty in accommodating all Defense Department objectives. (In this connection, Dr. Seamans said that he had had no difficulty in getting along with Brock McMillan whom he found reasonably objective and cooperative. It should be noted that in this program all funds are appropriated to NASA and the program is ultimately under NASA control and direction. McMillan is therefore in the position of a customer soliciting support from somebody else's stock.)

3. Dr. Seamans was very specific in saying that none of the programs run by NASA involve the development and insertion of a payload, as a separate component, into a vehicle which is launched or operated by some other agency. He stressed the fact that the success of NASA's operations depended on an interrelationship of a number of different contractors who were individually responsible for the production and delivery of various components required for individual launches. The assembly of these components and their integration in a given vehicle, however, is the responsibility of NASA itself, which is also responsible for all decisions relating to a specific orbital plan or involving changes or adjustments during an orbital flight.

4. This conversation has suggested certain conclusions:

a. NASA's experience does not parallel the arrangement which we have had in mind. NASA, for example, does not manufacture and deliver the GEMINI capsule for assembly and operational launching by the Air Force. On the other hand, there is nothing in NASA's experience which negates the validity of such an arrangement.

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b. The NASA experience is really relevant to another question. That is how to ensure that operational decisions, orbital plans, etc., are subordinated to intelligence requirements. NASA says, in effect, that they themselves must have the ultimate responsibility for decisions relating to orbit, etc., as well as all technical decisions relating to the assembly of the vehicle in order to be sure that the operation conforms to their program objective. It is possible that we could exercise adequate control to ensure compliance with USIB requirements with something less than total control of the program.

c. NASA's experience with [] has been more successful than our own. It should be noted that in this case [] is acting as a customer rather than a proprietor.

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d. Finally, it seems to me there is some significance in the fact that the partnership between NASA and the Air Force involving the GEMINI program has been established at something below the heads of agency level. Differences which develop between Seamans and McMillan are referred to McNamara and Webb for adjudication. This provides a somewhat better cushion to absorb differences and prevent the development of irreconcilable conflicts than an arrangement which calls for a partnership conducted at the heads of agency level.

JOHN A. BROSS
D/DCI/NIFE

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